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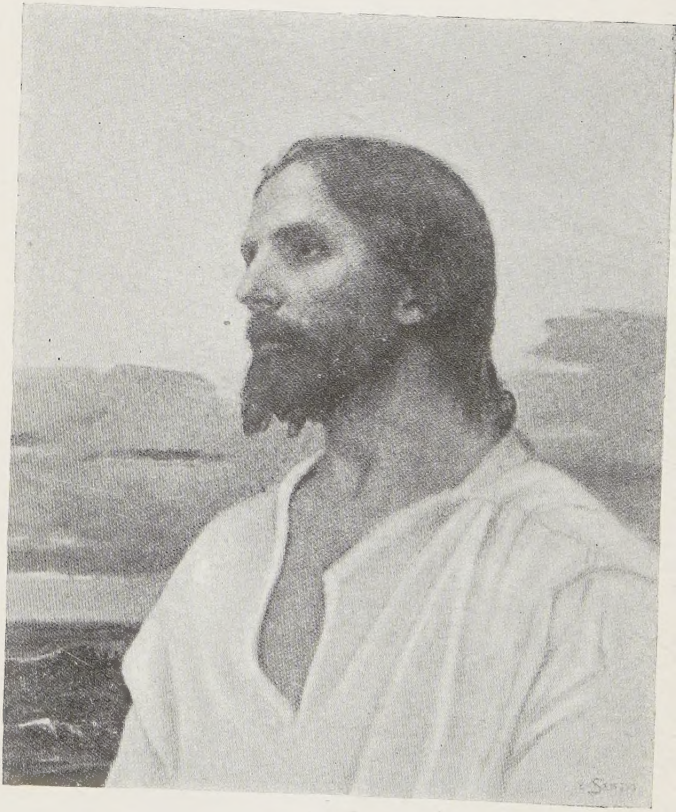
A DIVINE FRIEND



THE DIVINE FRIEND

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A
DIVINE FRIEND

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"THE COURAGE OF CHRIST," "THE CHARITY OF CHRIST," "THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST"

WITH A PREFACE BY
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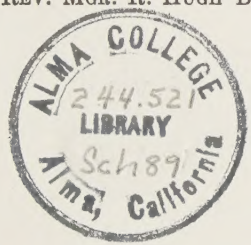

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	7
	INTRODUCTION	13
I	JOHN THE BAPTIST	25
II	NICODEMUS	41
III	JUDAS	54
IV	SAINT PETER	69
V	LAZARUS	84
VI	MARTHA	98
VII	MARY MAGDALEN	112
VIII	THE BELOVED DISCIPLE	129

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE DIVINE FRIEND . . . . *Frontispiece*

BURIAL OF CHRIST 52

LAST SUPPER 63

BELOVED DISCIPLE LEADS MARY FROM THE TOMB 134

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PREFACE

FRIENDSHIP with God, with all which this involves, was the final object for which there was created humanity in general and the individual soul in particular. If this is forfeited or unattained all else is lost; no achievements, or victories or possessions mean anything apart from this; no human relationships, ties, or affections but end in disillusion and misery unless the Divine Friendship sanctions and fulfills them.

To inaugurate and foster, therefore, this friendship of the soul with her "Maker and her Husband," is the supreme object of the Christian religion. Our Divine Lord lived on earth in order to teach its conditions to the world, died in order to repair its breaches, rose again and ascended into "newness of life" that He might consummate it. Every act of mercy which He performed during His Ministry, whether to dying bodies or dead

souls, every word which He uttered, every impulse of grace that streamed from His Sacred Humanity—it might almost be said, every movement of His every glance and every silence—all these were directed to one single end, whether by warning, illustration, or attraction—namely to fulfilling through Redemption the marred purpose of Creation, and to bring back into that relation of Friendship of God, which sin alone can interrupt, those rational souls which were created with this and no other end in view.

In one very special and marked manner the life of our Divine Lord, as recorded by His Evangelists under His own inspiration, exhibits and illustrates this which was His purpose. For it is expressly recorded that in five or six instances there were souls brought into contact with Him who were admitted to a particular and unique intimacy with Him. First of all—or, rather in an altogether unique and unapproachable manner—there was His own Blessed Mother, the one single person consecrated be-

fore she could merit anything by her aspirations, as the one Immaculate shrine in which God should tabernacle—placed, that is to say, in the highest possible degree of union with God of which any human soul is capable, simultaneously with the first moment of her existence. And, following at a little distance upon the Heavenly Mother's footsteps came one, not immediately conceived, yet sanctified in his mother's womb by the approach of his unborn Saviour—he who was the last prophet of the old Dispensation and the first of the new, he who turned from denouncing the sins of Israel and of humanity on the one side, to acclaim, on the other the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." And so the rest follow—souls distinguished, explicitly or implicitly, by a peculiar degree of friendship with God, men and women who at first perhaps recognizing only the holiness of His Humanity were initiated little by little into a recognition of the glory of His Divinity, persons distinguished above the rest as being looked upon by Jesus

and "loved," as being selected for special privileges, addressed in words inapplicable to the rest, educated and led on step by step along the path of Friendship to the goal of perfect union.

Now in one sense every soul is an unique creation; no two souls have ever received precisely the same graces and opportunities from God; every soul, therefore, is able to give back to God what none other can offer Him. As Christ Himself is unique, crowned with "many diadems, having a name written, which no man knoweth but Himself," so every redeemed soul is, though in another sense, also unique, receiving "a white stone; and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it."

It must never be thought, therefore, that canonized saints, or the elect souls of the gospel-record, are God's favorites in such a sense as to deprive those who have received lesser graces (or who having received exceptional graces have failed to correspond with them) of

their own peculiar relationships with God. Not a soul who has received Baptism but has her feet on the ladder of Sanctity; there is not a soul in grace that is not simultaneously in the state of Friendship with God however little may be her comprehension of that state; there is not a soul whom God has ever made who cannot give to Him a love and an attention which none other can render.

The following pages contain a series of studies of the characters and lives of some of those whom our Divine Lord expressly distinguishes as standing in degrees of particular intimacy with Himself. They are specimens so to speak, selected from that "multitude which no man can mention," selected yet again from that smaller company of "His own" of whom so many, as His own beloved disciple tells us, "did not receive Him"—those who were given the amazing and awful privilege of seeing and speaking with, in the "days of the flesh," the Divine Lover and Redeemer of souls. They are specimens, then, of that hu-

manity to which we all belong, thrown alive and vivid upon the illuminated sheet of the Gospel in order to exhibit to ourselves that relationship with God made man to which every one of us, in his own degree, can aspire.

ROBERT HUGH BENSON

INTRODUCTION

IN the history of literature and art we find certain elemental sources of inspiration common to almost every age and every people. The best in literature and the best in art are simply a translation into outward form of what all men, whether learned or ignorant, feel to be a vital element in their daily lives, a very part of human nature itself. The feelings and inspirations that are commonest, because closest to the heart of man, have always the strongest appeal to both poet and people.

We are not surprised, then, to find in the pages of both ancient and modern writers the theme of friendship so frequently and so eloquently treated. Whether men realize it or not, they all long for friendship, and seek unceasingly to satisfy that longing. Without friendship life is cold, incomplete. All the philosophy of this world cannot console the friendless man,

because it cannot change his nature, which cries out for one whom he can call his friend.

The philosophy that does possess the power of consoling us for the absence of human friends is the philosophy that soars above this world and draws us to a never-failing Friend in heaven. With Him we have all that our hearts could desire. We believe this truth; but in practice very few realize it. Consequently, while we strive to bring the one great Friendship into our lives, we nevertheless feel the need of merely human friendship, with its partial and ofttimes only temporary help. Indeed, this is as our Lord wishes it to be. Reflections of Himself we see in the souls of those about us. Through the lesser friendships this reflected beauty leads us to form, we may rise to a better knowledge, with higher yearning and harder effort to attain the fulness of a Divine Friendship.

Not that our friends on earth are to be cast aside, as we come closer to our One True Friend. In this world even perfect friendship with our

Lord is not at all inconsistent with other friendships. Christ Himself in His life on earth gives us an example that justifies this assertion. There was, of course, perfect union between the Son of God made Man and His Father, yet there was also real friendship between the same God-Man and His creatures; notably with John, the beloved apostle, and Mary Magdalen, two friendships in particular that throbbed with life and love, that were fraught with a human interest that still thrills the very souls of those who seek to bring ideal friendship into their lives.

Impelled to form friendships by a yearning that comes from the depths of human nature, and encouraged in the possession and enjoyment of these friendships by the example of our Saviour Himself, it is most necessary for us to know what friendship is, in order that every relationship of this nature that we enter into be genuine and placed on the highest possible plane.

Because of one very common misconception

of the real meaning of the word, many people miss the happiness that comes from true friendship. For them this virtue, so far as giving goes, is one-sided; their idea of a friend is one who gives. They themselves have no active part in the relationship. Love and gratitude towards their benefactor are weak or entirely wanting. If they find one who is good enough to confer benefits upon them, they are very apt to rest content with this fancied friendship. And all the time the source of friendship's real happiness is drying up, so far as they are concerned. They remain constantly passive and merely receptive of favors, so that, as a result, their hearts contract and become cold, instead of throbbing with the life that is nourished by love and grows with giving.

If men of this character find no benefactors to feed their selfishness with false kindness, they are doomed to live miserably alone. Their idea of a friend is so distorted that they seek in vain among their fellow-men for one who will be to them what they wrongly think a friend ought

to be. Constantly in their vain search for something that exists only in their misinformed minds they tread under foot the pearls that lie about them. It is the dust of their own selfishness that settles thickly on the true friend, the pearl of great price, and hides him from their view, before they realize his existence. Almost literally they trample upon him, and hurry forward on their hopeless errand.

They expect everything, and give nothing. What they seek is not friendship. It is charity, almsgiving, philanthropy; and they expect to be the ones benefited. He who gives alms to another, does not by that fact alone form, or give evidence of, friendship with the one he helps. It is true he acts as a friend in so far as he gives for the purpose of helping another, and demands nothing in return. But it takes two friends to form a friendship. Each gives, or desires to give, to the other principally because he wishes to benefit his friend, not because he expects a return. The love that is the life of friendship is mutual, and friends know it is mu-

tual. Each feels that the other loves him. And this love is one that thrives and waxes strong in action, drawing its power primarily, indeed, from within, but growing still more vigorous as it feeds upon the varied interchange of kind words and acts, and the subtler communion of souls, each of which it inspires and brings to greater or less perfection in every real friendship.

This interchange, whatever be its nature, is the basis of friendship. It is also the standard of perfection in friendship, the measure of its strength or weakness. Friends give to each other. What they give is good—at least they think it good—otherwise in giving it they would not act as friends. The gift may be tangible, as money, lands, material possessions of any kind; or it may be merely a look, a smile, a word of encouragement; or, more subtle than these, an earnest prayer, a feeling of anxiety for a friend, a thrill of joy at his good fortune; unseen gifts that are still most real both to him who gives and the one who somehow feels

their hidden presence in the heart of his friend.

All the gifts involved in the intercourse between friends may not in themselves be good, even though, through mistaken kindness or lack of training, they be looked upon as good. Friendship founded upon an interchange of those things that are of no real value to the recipient, cannot rise in quality above the standard of this false and infirm basis. Friends whose ideals are of the earth, possess but the lowest form of friendship. They wish each other what they think to be the highest good; and are sincere, no doubt, in these good wishes. But the friendship they possess cannot rise above the merely material basis that gives it whatever life it possesses. The good things of the intellectual order, spiritual gifts, works that merit reward in the life to come; these form a nobler foundation for friendship, and place it on a correspondingly higher plane. A friend may give to his friend the wealth of a nation, may receive in return a lifetime of material service,

nay, even life itself. And yet this friendship may be on a much lower plane than the spiritual friendship of two humble servants of God who give their best efforts to the perfecting of each other's soul by prayers and admonitions, and constant watchful care.

Let it be understood, however, that a higher friendship based upon an unselfish interchange of higher gifts does not necessarily exclude gifts of a lower order. The greater, the nobler good may claim as its own and as part of itself all that is of lesser value, provided only that it has a value. The noblest friendship takes its nobility, its lofty standard, from the nature of the highest form of communication between friends. Beneath this there may be other and less noble forms of communication. Indeed, in certain cases there must be an interchange of merely material goods, of gifts that are not at all spiritual save in the motive actuating them. One would not possess a true friendship for another, if he did not, when able, help in a concrete way his friend in physical distress. To

whisper words of comfort to him, to lessen his agony of mind by advice and spiritual consolation, and thus give to him gifts of the higher order; all this does not discharge the full duty of friendship, if at the same time he refuse to give of his abundance that material help his friend stands in need of.

Men to-day, as the men of all ages, are famishing for friendship. They may or may not know the cause of it, but there is, to a greater or less degree, in the hearts of all a hunger that clamors to be sated, a void that cries out for repletion. It is the soul seeking its Maker, the child of God that looks for its Father. Time and again it springs forth and fastens itself upon another, hoping that at last the void shall be filled, and the hunger sated. But the one it clings to is like itself a creature, and can give only what a creature possesses. Yet even this, when it is given, can satisfy for a time the heart-hunger, and aid in the upward flight to perfect friendship. Many a soul, knowing little or nothing of God and His all powerful grace,

flutters starved to the earth, because its life is lonely, its higher sustenance scanty, insufficient through lack of human friendships.

If men would realize how much they have to give, if they would realize also that only the Perfect Friend, their Maker, their Redeemer, can fully satisfy the hunger of the soul, they would not expect the impossible from an earthly friend, and would be satisfied with what such a friend is able to give. And more important still; they themselves would give of their finite treasure to help their friend, and count themselves blessed when they have an opportunity of giving. To do this means effort, a constant struggle. It requires first and above all a Perfect Ideal, as complete a knowledge of this Ideal as possible, and a patient, consistent effort at imitation.

Christianity possesses what the pagan writers who wrote so gloriously of friendship did not possess, what even the Old Testament does not afford, save by anticipation, through type and prophecy: a Perfect, a Divine Ideal in the Flesh,

God made Man, who lived among men, and chose to have men as His friends.

In our study of this Ideal, in our imitation of Him, we must, however, bear in mind that His exemplification of Friendship in His intercourse with man instructs us in how we should act towards our friends. Let us not expect others to act towards us as He acted towards His friends. If we do, we shall miss the great lesson, and shall live lives bitter with disappointment.

Friendship must be cultivated. Let each one look to himself that the Ideal be made concrete in his own character. Let him take from the example of Christ the perfections of friendship, and let him seek in those who shared Christ's friendship not alone the good qualities that adorned, but also the faults that blemished their friendship, for the friends of our Lord were not perfect as their Model was. The perfections he will imitate, the faults he will avoid; and the result will be, not perfect friendship, for this is found only in Heaven, but a friendship that

will be as our Lord wished it to be, solace in sorrow, consolation in mourning, encouragement in failure, and above all a strong arm to sustain us in our struggle against Satan and all that seeks to draw us away from the final, lasting and full friendship with Jesus Christ.

I

JOHN THE BAPTIST

TOWARDS the close of the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, a strange figure appeared on the banks of the Jordan, near its entrance into the Dead Sea. Many passers-by stopped to look a second time at the stern features of the man, at his gaunt, half-naked frame, with its leathern girdle about the loins, and rough cloak of camel's hair cast carelessly over the shoulders. And while they idly watched him, the words that fell from his lips, struck upon their ears and held them captive. They listened; and the natural eloquence and intense earnestness of this new prophet revealed to them an unlooked-for spiritual beauty and power hidden beneath the rough exterior. Ere they realized it, the unexpected force and fire of the dark eyes burned an entrance through the strongest barrier of indifference and sin, an

entrance into which rushed resistlessly, straight to the depths of their souls, the message of warning, of penance, of preparation for the coming of Christ.

The words of this strange preacher rang through the land as those of no other prophet of Israel. His was the last note of preparation, and the nearness of fulfillment lent a beauty and vigor to his preaching that no other message had possessed. He was the immediate forerunner of the Messias. His eyes were to look upon the Son of God made Man, and his work was to merge into the Divine Labor of Love and Redemption. For years he had lived in the solitude of the desert, where his mind had been filled with the glory of his task, and his heart had overflowed with grateful devotion to the One he was to serve. From the pages of the Old Prophets there had risen before him time and again the figure of his Divine Friend, the Foretold of centuries. Line by line the face and form grew before his mental vision. And fed by the love brought to his soul by this communing

with his unseen friend, the purpose of his life grew and waxed indomitably strong, even as Zachary's son himself "grew, and was strengthened in spirit."

Rarely has any friendship had the privilege of so long a preparation as that of John the Baptist and our Lord. The heart of the creature who was chosen by Christ as the first friend of His public ministry, was schooled in the life of sacrifice and separation for years before the two actually saw each other face to face. Each in retirement spent many years of preparation for his special task: John to serve his Friend and thus help men, Jesus to serve men and thus help His friend. For John, our Saviour was all, for Jesus, John was but one of countless millions to be saved, and yet a friend, marked out amongst the myriads of Adam's sons to be His Precursor. Eternity held secret the mystery of the choice. For thirty years the wonder of it all filled the heart of the chosen one.

By the ford of Bethsaida, one day in late Fall, stood John, preaching and baptizing. No

word of his Friend had reached him, and his heart longed to see in the flesh the One whose spirit even now held holy converse with him.

A crowd of Galilean pilgrims approaches. As they draw nearer, the eyes of the prophet see amongst them a figure whose earnest gaze, fixed upon him, thrills his heart and stirs from its depths a wave of affection that never had risen before, save in the silent, secret communings with his Lord. But now there is a visible, tangible term for his love. The creation of fancy, built about the Messias of type and prophecy, merges into the full reality of the flesh. The pent-up fire of feeling leaps beyond the bounds of self, and flashes unerringly to the form of the long-looked for Redeemer of man. Friend instinctively recognizes friend, and as the Divine Pilgrim stands before His creaure for the baptism of penance, John acknowledges his position of servant and forerunner, and in humble terms protests "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?"

The mind of Jesus knows the deep humility that prompts the protest. Other hearts than that of a friend, a Divine Friend, might at first blush suspect a spirit of opposition in these words of John, might resent his attitude of seeming contradiction and dictation. But our Lord, even had He not enjoyed the perfect knowledge of the Godhead, would have felt, as a true friend could feel, the real meaning hidden in the first words spoken to Him by John. Calmly, kindly he answers, "Suffer it to be so now." And with infinite condescension He gives a reason, "For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice." Thus does the real friend always act, taking into account and answering the heart's ofttimes hidden meaning. And many a friendship might have been saved and strengthened, had heart thus heard and answered heart, instead of passion passing heedlessly over a friend's true motive and meaning, and wounding mortally his love by the deadly dart of a cruel retort.

The meeting of the two friends was brief, but

long enough for the Spirit of God to descend upon the Messias and formally proclaim His identity. Then, as silently and as suddenly as He had come, the Divine Galilean leaves the banks of the Jordan, and goes into the desert for forty days of fasting and prayer—fasting and prayer that He needed not for Himself, but the merit of which made priceless, infinite nourishment for the starved souls of men. And to John went immediately this spiritual food to sustain him in his service of friendship, a service that needed sustenance for now it was to be severely tried. John's fame as a preacher, as a man of God, had stirred up interest in the great council of the Jews, the Sanhedrin; and a deputation was sent from Jerusalem to inquire if he were the Christ, the expected Leader of Israel.

The question was put to him squarely, "Who are thou?" And he confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed: "I am not the Christ." Nor would he claim a lesser honor, that of being Elias, or the other prophet whom the Jews

expected to precede the coming of Christ. He was, as he goes on to tell them, only "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." His mission was but to prepare the way for the advent of the Messias. As the priests, Pharisees, and Levites clustered about him, and put their questions to him, they unwittingly provided for future generations a magnificent example of self-renunciation. Here was an opportunity for John to step at once into a position of the highest prominence. He could easily have claimed for himself the dignity of Elias, even of the Messias. But self was unhesitatingly thrust aside. His duty was to serve Him who was both his God and his Friend. And the heart of the Baptist had been so perfected in love for his Divine Friend, that he was not conscious of making any sacrifice, of resisting any temptation to pride and vainglory. He did as a matter of course what a less unselfish man would have hesitated about doing, even for the closest friend. And in the meantime the Friend he served, and for whom he sacrificed himself, was

not merely a passive recipient of this gift of friendship. His soul, in perfect touch with that of His servant, sent forth from the desert of fasting, from the mount of temptation, through an all-powerful intercession, the grace that enabled John to act as a true friend.

As if to reward him for the self-renunciation manifested in the reply to the delegation from Jerusalem, our Lord appeared to John on the following day. And now the visible presence of the Messias inspires in the Baptist the same supreme self-effacement effected by His unseen presence in the heart of His friend. But here the human element, the sight of his beloved One face to face, gives an added touch to the words spoken by John. The friendship itself is no higher, no truer than before, but now its expression is given a heightened tone that comes from his ecstasy of joy at seeing the Friend. The prophet speaks with the exalted imagery of the poet, "Behold the lamb of God." Again on the morrow he meets and salutes Him in the same manner. And here again, though in a

different way, his friendship is put to the test. Two of his disciples, Andrew and John, leave him and join our Lord. Had his friendship not been true, it could not have stood successfully this practical test. It was his first loss of followers, and they were among the best of those associated with him. He had said, but a few hours before, that the One whose coming he preached, was to be preferred to him; and here is a speedy fulfillment of his words.

Others followed the example of Andrew and John. As the weeks went by, the new Leader's fame spread throughout the country. Those who still were too blind to heed the words of the Baptist, came complaining to their neglected master. "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold he baptizeth, and all men come to him." They were envious. John is saddened at their conduct. The great love for his Friend that fills him, leaves no room for envy. Once more his heart rises to the height of poetic expression. This time it is joy at the honors paid his Friend

that inspires the sublime outburst: "He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled." John, who is the friend of Christ, the bridegroom who takes mankind as His bride, rejoices as a true friend when he sees the bridegroom coming into possession of His bride, even though every accession to Jesus means a decrease in the number of his own followers. Let them fall away until none remains; he still possesses his Friend.

Constantly the Precursor strives to turn his followers to our Lord. Even in prison, as far as his limited opportunities permit him, he labors for the same end. For this purpose he sends two of his disciples to ask our Lord if He is the Christ, hoping that the words and deeds of the Great Leader will win them over. Our Saviour knows the motive of John, works miracles in the presence of the emissaries, and sends a message back to the prison. What follows after the de-

parture of John's disciples is a striking revelation of our Saviour's deep love for His friend and an object lesson for all who would pattern their friendship after the model given us by Jesus Christ. True friendship engenders a keen perception of possible injury to a friend. Men who are normally dull and slow in seeing, often are quickened, and become acutely sensitive, when one they love is in danger. Friendship not only has power to inspire deeds of heroism, but also may give to friends an almost superhuman vision and wisdom in their relations with each other. Our Lord, of course, did not need the stimulus of friendship to see that the bystanders might misconstrue the action of John in sending emissaries to ask if He were the Christ, and wrongly see in it an evidence of waning faith. Nor did He need this stimulus to reveal the means of removing these suspicions. But because He was man, as well as God, we may attribute His actions as man to that particular virtue from which in men they ordinarily proceed. And, therefore, we may say that His keen

sensitiveness to the danger threatening John's reputation, and His loving wisdom manifested in the means He took to avert the danger, were effects of the virtue of Friendship which as Perfect Man He possessed in its fulness.

From His lips there came a eulogy of His friend, so eloquent and sublime in its expression, so indicative of affection for the Precursor and of esteem for his character and work, that the least suspicion of John's fidelity must have fled with shame from the minds of those who listened. In silence and deepening awe they drank in the intense, clear-cut sentences driven quickly upward by the love beneath them to the summit of praise thus expressed by these concluding words: "For I say to you: Amongst those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist."

The friendship between our Saviour and His Precursor differs from most other friendships in that the two friends so rarely saw each other. The New Testament tells us of but three brief meetings, and we have no reason to suppose

there were more. This fact and one other—the unique relationship between the two—give us the predominant characteristics and lessons of the first friendship of our Lord's public ministry. John's persevering devotion to Jesus, in spite of his separation from Him, is a standing rebuke to those who fail in friendship through lack of frequent meetings. True friends will give to each other, in the rarest and briefest personal intercourse, so evident and convincing a manifestation of affection, that the heart will retain in times of separation a sense of being loved, keen enough not only to keep friendship from faltering, but even to strengthen it by reason of the purely spiritual intercourse that alone is then possible.

Our Lord's love for His friend was so strong, and so perfectly realized by John, that only the slightest material manifestation was sufficient to keep the friendship on the highest level, and prompt the Baptist to give to his Friend all he possessed, his whole heart and soul, all his time and strength, and at last even life itself.

The relations between the two were different from those existing between our Lord and His other followers. The latter, it is true, also served our Saviour faithfully, worked wonders by His power and permission, and strove to bring men to their Master as John did. But the latter stood, in a sense, by himself. This is true not only of his life, before our Lord appeared, but even afterwards. While Christ Himself was preaching and forming a body of followers, John still retained his leadership over a band of disciples distinct from his Master's. Outwardly there was little or no change in his exercise of a ministry subordinate, of course, to our Saviour's, but still separate in its organization. We know that John's sole object was to bring all his followers to the Messias, but yet in securing this end he worked only indirectly under our Lord.

Gracious, indeed, was Christ in permitting this, and unbounded His trust in His friend. A lesson to those worldly leaders and masters from whose lives petty envy of subordinates

drives away all likelihood of true friendship with the ones who serve them. Our Lord, by His example, teaches those in authority that master and servant, ruler and subject, may form and maintain true friendships with each other. Nay, more than this. Does not His friendship for John warrant us in believing that the best service and the best leadership can be secured only when those who serve and those who lead are knit together rather by the nobler ties of friendship than by those of self-interest and a common cause?

As a rule there must be frequent intercourse between superiors and those subject to them, between master and servant, employer and employee. What a splendid opportunity is here afforded for the formation of strong friendships. Only add to these relationships one other, that of friend to friend, and see how even the most ordinary intercourse would flash from the dullness of the commonplace to the glowing beauty brought to it by the virtue of friendship. And thus joy would be given to many

lives that now, through ignorance and sordid self-love, are blinded to the priceless treasure hidden in these neglected opportunities lying within the limits of everyone's life on earth.

II

NICODEMUS

THE Feast of the Passover is almost finished. Night has settled upon the city; and its people with their pilgrim guests, faithful Hebrews from far and near, have sought sleep in crowded homes and inns. The moon shines upon the silent, deserted streets, along one of which hurries a muffled figure, seeking wherever possible the friendly shadow of building or garden wall. Now and then the searching moonlight fastens upon his form as he emerges into an open space. It is no skulking robber or homeless wanderer who hastens forward so stealthily, casting quick, anxious glances on all sides as if fearful of detection. The clothing and carriage of the man reveal high rank, and riches too. Curiously we follow him as he moves toward the poorer section of Jerusalem. Here he walks slowly, as if the neighborhood is less

familiar, scans each house, and stops at last before one of humble appearance. He seeks admission, and, as he enters, the cloak is loosened, and we see the countenance of a Jewish ruler, rich and influential, a member of the Sanhedrin—Nicodemus.

He who greets him, and bids him be seated, is our Lord. It is the first, and, so far as the Gospel tells us, the only meeting between the two. The love of the Saviour with its infinite power of attraction, its wonderful wealth of self-abasement, has gone out to this proud, slow-yielding Pharisee, has rested in his blind, contracted heart, and stirred a responsive love within it. Only a very little love, it is true, the tiniest spark; but yet it is a beginning, enough to warm and widen the heart to greater power of love later on. The friendship is formed. Almost exclusively one-sided as it now is, there is still enough response and promise on the part of Nicodemus to warrant our calling the relationship between Christ and His convert by so sacred a name as friendship.

Nicodemus had heard much about the New Master, whose daring action in cleansing the Temple had but recently stirred the whole city to excitement and curiosity. He did not, indeed, come to our Lord as a more loyal, and hence more courageous friend would have come. He sought Him in the secrecy of the night, fearful lest his companions see and ridicule him, perhaps expel him from his place of honor. But yet he came. Others, as well as he, had seen the unmistakable courage and authority of Jesus, had felt the compelling power of His words and actions—they did not come. The merit of his action was alloyed by selfishness, still there was merit in it. With all his precautions he ran a risk, and he knew it. His action was not generously brave, but he acted. He gave something to Christ in return for the priceless gift of grace given by his new-found Friend.

Our Lord, acting as a true Friend, brushed aside the blemish, and viewed solely the beauty hidden in the conduct of Nicodemus. He knew,

and made allowance for, the circumstances of His convert's position. Brought up and associating solely with those of his own class, Nicodemus was deeply enmeshed in the prejudices and vainglory of the Pharisees who felt that they had the highest religious knowledge and a monopoly of religious teaching. The first word spoken by the new disciple to our Lord shows that he had triumphed, at least partly, over the clamor of self-love. It was only half-humbly, we may suppose, and hesitatingly that he addressed Jesus as "Rabbi," thereby acknowledging His authority to teach, and placing himself in the position of a pupil. But it represented a struggle and a certain measure of sacrifice. This his Divine Friend was quick to see and lavishly generous in rewarding.

In the conversation that followed, we are simply amazed at the wonderful revelations made to Nicodemus. This hesitating, timorous seeker after truth is not destined to be an apostle, and still our Lord speaks to him of

truths that the apostles themselves had hardly as yet been instructed in, for it was but the beginning of the Public Ministry. And while He talks about these sacred doctrines that form the basis of the faith He is founding, He knows full well the cowardice of His listener, and his future lack of active co-operation. He manifests through it all the forbearance of a perfect Friend, and in His merciful condescension very probably spends the greater part of the night with His half-incredulous visitor. Had the heart of Nicodemus been filled with the light of a more intense love, he could easily have seen in the words of His teacher a revelation of His Divinity. Had his love been braver and more generous, his curiosity less carnal, then and there the full light and meaning of his Master's words would have burst upon him, and brought him to the feet of his Friend. Then the shame and sorrow, the tardy atonement of his future life, would have been avoided, and his friendship would have burst at once into full flower, to brighten the ministry of our Lord with the

beauty of one more life publicly devoted to His cause. But this was not to be. The heart of the timorous disciple gave barely enough nourishment to insure the slowest growth of the plentiful seed that fell upon its almost barren soil. And Nicodemus left his Lord, going back to his outward life of former days. But the inner life was changed. A new relationship had crept into it, and the voice of his Divine Friend would not be stilled amidst all the clamor of the world, and the distracting calls of daily duty.

The third year of our Lord's Ministry is half finished. Again the city of the elect is filled with faithful Hebrews. It is Autumn, and the feast now being celebrated is the Feast of Tabernacles. Through the streets, in the squares, and even on the flat roofs of the houses, one sees hundreds of small, green pavilions gracefully formed from the leafy branches of palm, olive and myrtle trees. Under these dwell for seven days the sons of Israel in memory of their fathers' march through the desert to the

promised land. The joyous chanting of psalms, the sound of trumpets, the waving branches of palm in the hands of the pilgrims reveal the joyous nature of the occasion.

And yet all is not joyful in the city. In the council-chamber of the Sanhedrin, gloomy faces and bitter words mark the progress of a meeting that is plainly out of tune with the spirit of the Festival. All at once the angry voices of the speakers are hushed. New arrivals are entering the hall. Quickly, eagerly the Pharisees and priests scan the figures as they pass through the entrance. They are evidently expecting some particular person, and the dark disappointment that settles upon their faces, as the door is closed, shows that he has not arrived. The new-comers advance to the centre of the room. They are at once surrounded and angrily questioned, "Why have you not brought him?" "The ministers answered: Never did man speak like his man." They had been sent to seize Jesus, but the power of His Godhead had overawed them, and they

could not fulfill their mission. The Victim's hour was not yet come. Confidently the Sanhedrin had hoped this time to seize our Lord and put Him to death. In their deep chagrin the members gave vent to bitter invective and even cursed the multitude for listening so willingly to the Divine Teacher. It was a dangerous moment to oppose them. Even to keep silence and not join in with their passionate outbursts against our Lord was liable to draw deadly enmity upon the head of him who thus attempted to remain neutral.

But there was one who dared to stand aloof, and with calm features face the angry crowd; one whose conscience, stilled for many months by cowardly self-interest, now spoke, with voice that would not be hushed, to a heart that held still living a love for the hunted Victim of his fellow-councilors' hatred. It was Nicodemus. And the pent-up fire that had been dimly burning in his soul ever since the secret visit, feeding on the fuel of a slighted Friend's love, now burst forth

in defense of the Friend: "Doth our law judge any man, unless it first hear him, and know what he doth?" Calm, unimpassioned words they were, not like those that would have come fiercely from a friend who had trained himself in former service, and had fed his friendship at the altar of continuous self-sacrifice; but for all that they were bravely and opportunely spoken. And it was all the harder for Nicodemus to rise to this opportunity, because he had failed so often before. Perhaps, too, it was better for him to take this method of calm defense. His opponents were almost beside themselves with passion; and a sober, discreet counsel like that Nicodemus gave was really the best way to serve his Friend. At any rate, his object was accomplished. The assembly broke up without taking any further measures against Christ, "and every man returned to his own house." But not before they had turned their bitter, sarcastic invectives against the defender of an absent Friend. And from that time on Nicodemus must have felt that he shared no

longer in the same high degree as of old the confidence and esteem of his fellow-Sanhedrists. The one, true friendship could not exist side by side with the false; and he had bravely laid the axe to the root of the latter.

The defeat of the Pharisees was but temporary. The wise counsel of Nicodemus fell on ears that had long since closed themselves to any word in defense of our Lord. A few months later victory finally crowns their efforts. The one they hated hangs crucified on the hill of Calvary. Exultantly they congratulate each other, striving to put off by forced rejoicing the strange heaviness that weighs down their hearts. They leave the scene of fancied triumph and seek their homes. But not all, for one who has been with them during the crucifixion loiters behind, waits until the others have left, and then hastens back, drawn by he knows not what power, to gaze upon the form of his crucified Friend. It is Nicodemus, who now joins those of our Lord's followers still standing upon the hill. They take the Body down

from the Cross, and place it in the arms of our Blessed Lady. Weeping bitterly, she wipes the blood and perspiration from the Divine Features. Grief so overcomes the heartbroken mother that she sees nothing save the Body of her Son. Nicodemus comes closer. Silent, unnoticed, he stands beside her; and God showers His grace upon him.

Six months have passed since his defense of Christ before the Sanhedrin. During that interval, still separated by hesitation and fear from full friendship with our Lord, and estranged from his former friends by his bold action in defending One whom they hated, his life has been more lonely and more miserable than ever. Now he stoops to see the features of his Friend, calm in death. Only once before has he been so near to Him. The memory of that night long past flashes before his mind. Once more the silent lips seem to move. Once more he hears the wondrous words of eternal wisdom. The eyes are closed, but for him they seem to open and pierce into his soul with sad,

reproachful gaze. And now he sees the meaning of the friendship offered him so generously, and so generously guarded for him by his Lord in spite of his feeble, cowardly response. His heart strings are loosed, and his tears, mingling with Mary's, fall upon the upturned face.

Too late! His Friend is dead! But no, it is not too late, for now he knows that the friendship he had so faintly grasped in the past, is not dead, cannot die; that the Friend who gave it, still gives it, because He is the very Son of God made man. Shame, sorrow, repentance, well up in his heart and almost overmaster him. But sternly he represses these feelings for the present. There will be time for them in the years to come. Now there is an opportunity for some slight atonement. If he failed to serve the living Friend, he can at least give of his wealth to serve the lifeless Body of this Friend. His Master and Lord must be all-forgiving, all-good, else He would not offer him this last chance of manifesting a friendship he had so

H. Told pinx

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

often and so miserably failed to manifest in the past.

And this time he does not fail. The blood of his Friend, shed for his sake, is too abundantly scattered about him for that. Fearlessly, caring naught for the sneers of his former friends, "he who at first came to Jesus by night," comes now in full view of all who care to see him, comes bringing the gift of a prince, "a mixture of myrrh and aloes about an hundred pound weight" to embalm the Body of his dead Master and Friend. There at the tomb, by the silent form of his Lord, in the darkening shades of evening, the flower of his friendship for Jesus unfolds its last petals, and sadly, though in the beauty of full bloom, bends over to bedeck the burial of this generous, long-suffering, all-forgiving Friend.

III

JUDAS

IN the hill-country bordering the western shore of Lake Tiberias, somewhat to the south of Capharnaum, stands a mountain famed since the days of our Lord as the Mount of the Beatitudes. It was in the neighborhood of this mountain that Jesus appeared after the sorrowful days of retirement following the death of the Baptist. Accompanied by His disciples, He labored once more amongst the people who quickly gathered about Him from all quarters. The formal organization of the Apostolic Body was now at hand. Towards the close of a long, weary day of preaching and miracle working, He withdrew alone to the summit of the Mount, and there spent the night in prayer. It was the eve of a most important task. Twelve men were to be selected to help

Him in a special manner in the accomplishment of His Mission.

What thoughts passed through His mind during the long star-lit night-watch, the Father and Himself alone knew. When the sun rose and stirred to wakefulness with its warm rays the sleeping throng at the mountain's foot, the tireless Teacher walked amongst them and called to Him the twelve who were to be the closest companions of His future life on earth: "And He chose twelve of them whom He also called Apostles, that they should be with Him: and that He might send them to preach. And He gave them power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils. Now the names of the twelve Apostles are these: The first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, ... and Judas Iscariot, who was the traitor."

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve chosen by God, Apostle, miracle-worker, divinely appointed to preach and cast out devils, co-laborer and friend of Jesus Christ—and

traitor! From obscurity, from humble station, he rises to the prominence, to the lofty position of membership in the Council of God on earth. For a year he follows the Messias as disciple, in comparative familiarity with His Leader, listening to His earliest words of instruction, witnessing His first miracles. Then from this enviable relationship with our Lord, He is drawn still nearer, to an inner circle of closest contact with Christ. He walks with his Friend, talks daily with Him, shares His poor fare, sleeps by His side beneath the same star-strewn covering of night, sees the miracle of friendship unfold its wonders in infinite measure in the lives of those about him, watches the impetuous love of Peter and the pure, mystic attachment of John rise step by step towards the high ideal manifested so clearly in his Saviour's example. And all the while his own attachment grows weaker and weaker, while the light that first lit his soul fades slowly away, and the fire that first flamed forth in sacrifice and service grows dull and chills into ashes beneath the cold, dank

breath of the demon avarice dwelling within him.

How clearly does our Lord reveal the traits of a true friend in His treatment of Judas. It has fallen to the lot of that apostle of love, St. John, to bring out in strongest relief the friendship of Jesus for His traitor apostle. And this he accomplishes principally by His repeated references to our Lord's foreknowledge of Judas' treason. The other evangelists speak of it only in connection with the Last Supper, but John refers to it on another occasion also. The beloved disciple's very first mention of the fallen apostle's name is coupled with a prediction of the betrayal. It is a year before the Passion. Our Lord has just finished that wonderful discourse in which the promise of the Eucharist is given. Peter has made his solemn protestation of faith in response to the sad question of His Saviour, "Will you also go away?" And immediately after the narration of these events, the evangelist writes thus: "Jesus answered them: Have not I chosen

you twelve; and one of you is a devil? Now he meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for this same was about to betray him, whereas he was one of the twelve."

A few verses before this, St. John speaks of the same foreknowledge possessed by our Lord, although in this case Judas is not mentioned by name: "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray him."

Just as the first two references to our Lord's foreknowledge of His apostle's treason are embodied in the chapter dealing with the Eucharist, i. e., with the promise of its institution, so the latter two, as given by St. John, are also connected with the Blessed Sacrament. This time they are narrated in connection with the Last Supper, when our Lord changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood. It seems as if the thought of our Saviour's greatest act of love for us, stirring up as it did in a special manner John's admiration for His Master's

Friendship towards man, moved the loving apostle to put on record man's basest act of ingratitude, his most miserable failure to return love for love.

As we would expect, the prediction is more explicit during the Last Supper, when the Blessed Sacrament was instituted, than when only the promise of it was given: "When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in spirit, and said: Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray me." Naturally the question is asked, "Lord, who is it?" Our Lord answers: "He it is to whom I shall reach bread dipped. And when he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

The love of Judas for his Master had grown cold long before these words of prophecy and warning were spoken by our Lord in the Supper Chamber on the eve of His Crucifixion. Long since, Judas had been transformed from a friend returning some little gratitude and slight service in exchange for Divine love, into a mere passive recipient of God's best gifts.

Now he has fallen still further from even the lowest level of friendship. His passive state has changed into one of active opposition to Christ. He has already entered into negotiations with the Jewish leaders for the betrayal of his Master. And yet, even now as he sits at table with our Lord, the latter's love for His fallen friend has in no wise lessened. The bond of friendship between the two is indeed broken, for there are no longer two friends, but only One. The Divine Friend still stands unmoved, unchanged, at His term of the relationship. Still flows from His Sacred Heart to the heart of Judas the priceless stream of grace, as full, as forceful as ever; but no longer can it penetrate that sin-hardened soul. God had given the traitor free will, and God would cease to be God were He to force the freedom of the rebellious apostle.

The warnings well up from the full heart of the sorrowing Saviour and fall ceaselessly and pleadingly upon the soul of Judas, but all entrance is denied them. And mark the kind, thoughtful consideration that clothes the last

appeals. Even though but a few hours remain before the hidden villainy shall reveal itself, our Lord will not betray the sin of one whom He still loves. Eleven faithful companions are gathered about the table when the solemn words of warning are spoken. But the meaning is hidden from them, and they do not dream that their fellow-apostle, Judas, is being accused of treason by their Master. There is no distinction made between him and the rest. He hears, with the others, the kind words of farewell and the wise counsels given for future guidance. He sees the Sacred Hands bless and break the Bread of Life. Upon his tongue as upon the others is placed the Body of His Lord. And he, too, drinks of the same precious Blood as they. The redoubled efforts of Christ to save him cease only when he withdraws himself from the table; when he turns finally from God, and leaves Satan in full, undisputed possession of his soul. "And after the morsel, satan entered into him. And Jesus said to him: That which thou dost do quickly. He, there-

fore . . . . . went out immediately. And it was night."

During the remainder of the evening, while Jesus, having finished His discourse, is praying alone in the Garden of Olives, praying still for Judas as well as for the rest of mankind, the traitor is hastily completing preparations for seizing his Master. He knows the favorite place of prayer to which many times he had gone with our Lord, and thither he leads the eager band of Jews.

And now we have the last, the foulest act in this awful tragedy. "And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail, Rabbi. And he kissed him." There can hardly be any deception here. The purpose of Judas is too obvious. It is revealed by the scowling faces, the clanking swords, the muttered curses of the rabble that followed close upon his heels. He could hardly hope that the meaningless mark of friendship, the kiss of salutation, would still hide from view the perfidy in his heart.

Now that all hope of saving Judas from his

THE LAST SUPPER

G. Fugel pinx

sin is gone, when it seems utterly impossible to fasten anew the bonds of friendship about the soul of the fallen friend, how does our Lord greet Judas? Surely not as before when He spoke to him, newly-called from the ranks of the disciples, ere the curse of money had blighted his budding love and attachment to the Blessed Master! Surely not by the same name He had applied to His eleven faithful apostles after Judas had left the supper chamber, when He said to them: "But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you!" Yes, it is with the same word that He now addresses Judas, "Friend, whereto art thou come?" And then, with this last tender reproach, the visible efforts to win back his former friend are at an end. But the mind of God holds secret within its infinite depths the memory of the hidden love still pouring forth upon the traitor.

Close after the guards who lead the Prisoner to the palace of the high priest, follows Judas.

His task is over, and his importance in the eyes of the Jewish leaders is gone, replaced by indifference, even contempt. Still he follows, led by an irresistible attraction, as if Destiny draws him to his fate. He hears eagerly every word of the examination; and when it is over, and the hall is cleared until the morrow, he waits outside the palace walls. Doubt and remorse begin to clamor for entrance into his heart. Try as he will to avoid it, the face of his betrayed friend haunts him with reproachful gaze, and the words spoken in the garden ring in his ears, "Friend, whereto art thou come?"

At last dawn appears. The hastily summoned Sanhedrin convenes in the Council Hall. Judas, haggard and nervous, mingles with the mob of onlookers. His eyes are fastened upon the form of his Friend. How eagerly he gazes at the pale face, the noble forehead, the tender eyes of his Master! Mercy is there if he could only see it. But love that once gave him a clearer vision of his Saviour's goodness is now gone, and despair dims his eyes and dulls the

intuition of earlier days. He hopes against hope that Jesus will not be condemned. When sentence is passed and the prisoner is led to Pilate, he closes his soul finally to the last glimmer of grace. Even now as he rushes from the Temple—the ring of the silver-pieces on its stone floor still echoing in his ears—even now he may still win back a share in Christ's friendship if he only turn to his Master. But no, he seeks rather, in self-inflicted death, to stifle the pangs of remorse. "He departed: and went and hanged himself with an halter."

The course of the traitor-apostle's friendship with our Lord runs opposite to that of Nicodemus. The latter's relationship with Christ is a progress, very, very slow, it is true, but still, as the event proved, a real progress towards a sincere attachment. With Nicodemus our Lord's efforts were directed towards keeping alive and perfecting a slight spark of love. With Judas He strove to sustain an affection and loyalty comparatively generous in the beginning. In the case of the

timorous disciple, the height of the friendship was attained at the end. With Judas the attachment, we may safely assert, was never quite so strong as at the beginning, when the grace of apostleship was still fresh in the heart of the newly-chosen one. Gradually at first, but more quickly as the months went by, the response of Judas to his Friend grew weaker, until at last, as we have seen, it disappeared altogether. For those who are striving to avoid the faults that shatter friendship, the lesson taught by the defection of Judas is, in one way, even more important than that taught by the example of persevering friendship.

The cause of the broken bond in the case of the traitor is obvious. The evangelists leave us no room for doubt. Another object of affection crept into the heart of Judas. And in this case it was not possible for the apostle to keep both. One was the Creator, claiming the heart's highest affection and giving His own in return; the other a creature, a thing without life and hence without love,

jealously demanding the sacrifice of all that is noble, of high aspirations, generous service, true friendship, and leaving nothing in compensation for the loss of these save a sordid heart from which had vanished all capacity for real love and happiness.

It was money that took the place of our Lord in the heart of Judas. No doubt, the call to the Apostleship found him willing and eager to serve his Master, but the sudden elevation to prominence, and the later appointment as treasurer of the little community proved to be too much of a temptation for him. Little by little the love of money filled his soul, blinding his eyes to the example, and dulling his ears to the words of his Lord. Had it not been so, he would have early seen his danger and avoided it. Had it not been so, he could not have listened unmoved to the frequent warnings of Jesus against avarice. For Judas was present when they were spoken; and may we not believe that not the least of our Saviour's motives in speaking them was to quicken the

sluggish conscience of His friend to a perception of the evil that was overcoming him? But Judas had ears and did not hear: "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other." He could not serve both God and mammon. And he chose the latter.

IV

ST. PETER

"AND Andrew the brother of Simon Peter was one of the two who had heard of John and followed him. He findeth his brother Simon, and saith to him: we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the CHRIST. And he brought him to Jesus. And Jesus looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter."

Thus did our Lord and St. Peter meet for the first time; and thus was formed a friendship most momentous for the Church Christ came to establish. Here in the beginning we find foretold the most important and far reaching effect of the relationship between the Master and His greatest apostle. Our Lord sees in Simon a frail, human being, naturally unfit to assume the leadership des-

tined for him; and in the first words He speaks to His newly-made convert, He gives him another name, one that is as significant of strength and firmness as the name he already possesses is indicative of frailty and fear, "Thou art Simon," i. e., the child of a dove, feeble and full of fear, "thou shalt be called Cephas," a rock. The friendship of the Son of God for the prince of the apostles is to transform the weak vessel of election into an immovable foundation for His future Church. Looked at from this point of view, the friendship between our Saviour and St. Peter was the greatest and most significant of all His friendships with man, and the grace that went out from Him to His successor in the visible leadership of the apostles was one of the grandest and richest gifts that friend could give to friend.

But the transformation was not effected at once. Indeed at the very close of the public ministry it seemed as if all the love expended by our Lord upon St. Peter had been in vain;

as if the prediction of God's Son had been false, so easily did the Rock momentarily give way before the onslaught of Satan. It is because of this slow and oftentimes hidden solidifying of Peter's character, and the consequent tolerance it demanded of our Lord, that we are in doubt which to regard as the greater gift of Divine Friendship to the apostle: the first call to service and leadership, or the countless acts of love performed in the training of the apostle for his future position. Let us not, however, separate the two. It is unnecessary. Each has its proper place in the Friendship. The latter is the logical outcome of the former. The relationship between our Lord and St. Peter during the years succeeding the call is but the unfolding, the gradual revelation of the beauty, the patience and power but partially revealed to our limited vision in the first words of Christ to his new disciple, Andrew's brother.

To none of the apostles does the Master give such frequent evidence of preference as to

Peter. Early in the public ministry, before the formal appointment of the Apostolic College, it is from Peter's ship that he addresses the multitude that throngs the beach by the Lake of Tiberias, choosing it in preference to the bark of the beloved disciple that lay close by. It is to Simon that He gives directions on the same occasion for the casting of the nets that resulted in the miraculous draught of fishes. It is to the same apostle that He addresses the spontaneous commendation: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven," and the following words even more deeply laden with love: "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

It is Peter also who walks upon the water at the word of his Master, who is sent by our Lord to catch the fish in whose mouth is found the coin for the payment of the tribute, and to whom these significant words are addressed: "Simon, Simon, behold satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted confirm thy brethren." It is Peter who is chosen with James and John to witness the miracle performed in the home of Jairus whose daughter is raised to life. The same three are chosen to witness Christ's transfiguration on Tabor, but it is Peter whom our Lord permits to act as spokesman on this occasion. Again in Gethsemane, along with the Sons of Zebedee, he is separated from the others, is permitted a closer companionship with his agonizing Lord and is singled out especially for the reproach, "Could you not watch one hour with me?" as if more were expected from him than from the others.

The special preference shown by our Lord

for St. Peter is brought out in bolder relief by the gospel narrative of the several occasions in which the Divine Friendship was put to a severe test, so severe in fact that a love less perfect than that of our Saviour's would hardly have stood the strain. Only a few of these trials of our Lord's patience are spoken of by the evangelists, but we may safely judge that many more, of varying intensity, characterized the intercourse between the two.

On one of these occasions it was Peter's mistaken idea of humility that prompted his obstinacy. It was on Holy Thursday. Our Lord had been washing His apostles' feet. "He cometh therefore to Simon Peter. And Peter said to him: Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" It seems a natural question. But yet it was an evidence of singularity on the part of the apostle. The others had submitted without a word, and our Lord evidently was satisfied with their conduct. Why should not Peter follow the example of the others? Our Lord patiently answers him, "What I do, thou

knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Even this gentle rebuke is not enough. Peter, replying, absolutely refuses to permit his Lord to go on with the ceremony, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answers with more severity, but still with the utmost consideration for Peter's feelings, condescending even to give an explanation, "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me." And then at last Simon submits.

It is interesting to compare this incident with another, and a somewhat similar one, when John showed a disinclination to baptize Jesus. But the Baptist did not go to the extreme St. Peter went to; he yielded at once after our Lord's first reply. With the chosen apostle, however, one explanation is not enough, it is followed immediately by a more obstinate refusal, calling for the exercise of still greater patience on the part of our Lord.

The most strongly-worded rebuke our Saviour administered to Peter was occasioned

by the latter's remonstrance against the possibility of his Master's passion and death. Christ had for the first time predicted His passion: "And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him, saying: Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee. Who turning said to Peter: Go behind me, satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." The apostle's affection, wrongly directed on this occasion, had blinded him to the true nature of our Lord's mission, to the deeper meaning of his Master's friendship for him. The rebuke, severe as it was, was well merited, and was the truest manifestation of real love for Peter that our Saviour could have shown. The more we study the circumstances under which it was spoken, the more we wonder at the marvellous patience that prompted it. For over two years St. Peter had been with our Lord, for the most part of this time on terms of closest intimacy, had heard His doctrines and seen the example of His life.

And now when the last year of public ministry is well on its way, he misses the very fundamental idea of the Divine plan of redemption, and strives to turn his Saviour from the dearest wish of His Sacred Heart—His Baptism of blood. And this he does in the presence of the others, and right after his special appointment as the head of the Church.

This latter circumstance gives us occasion for further thought. The same friend who confers privileges must also, when occasions arise, administer reproof. And it is difficult sometimes to say which of the two is the greater evidence of friendship. In St. Peter's case we know at least that our Lord's friendship for the prince of the apostles was just as strong, just as truly perfect when he administered the rebuke, as when he conferred the privilege of primacy.

The history of our Lord's passion gives us a faint idea of the two most touching trials Peter imposes upon his Master's love for him. The first is placed in the gloom of Gethsemane, an

appropriate setting for the sorrow it causes the Heart of our Lord. As on a former occasion this trial is also preceded by a mark of our Lord's special preference for His apostle. Peter is selected with James and John to accompany our Lord into the deeper shadows of the garden. Here the chosen three fall asleep while their Saviour prays. As they slumber peacefully, utterly oblivious of their Friend's agony, Jesus "cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me?" This time there is no marked severity in the tone, no open condemnation in the words. But the sorrow that forces itself into this reproach shows how deeply the Friend of Peter was wounded by His friend's lack of sympathy. Very likely our Lord's sorrow was all the more intense by reason of the foreseen fall of Peter that in a few hours was to fill still fuller the measure of his Master's suffering.

Twice during the last Supper Peter had protested that he would lay down his life for his

Master; and twice also had the Master predicted the fall of Peter. The sadness caused by this foreknowledge was present, together with countless other sorrows, in our Lord's heart as He gave to Peter the last spoken reproach he was to receive from his Saviour. One more rebuke, but a wordless one, was still to be administered. It was the hardest to give because the One who had to give it knew that it would cause His friend the bitterest anguish of his life. This was the single look that our Lord gave Peter as the third denial fell from the lips of the fallen apostle, "And the Lord turning looked on Peter." Once before he had turned to Peter, and had spoken to him in words of stern reproach, but now "turning" He uttered not a word; the rebuke conveyed by the single glance, however, was far more expressive than the most severely-worded remonstrance could have been. "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which he had said: Before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth he wept bitterly."

This was the climax of Peter's probation. The clouds that had been fitfully fleeting across his life during the past three years, dulling at times the glow of his friendship for Christ, were now thickening gloomily about him, hanging heavy and low, and hiding from all eyes save our Lord's the warm light of faith and love that still lurked deep down in his heart. But ere the tempest of ruin broke over him, penance parted the clouds, and from them fell, not the destroying deluge of divine anger, but Mercy's saving showers. And now with brighter, more constant ray, forth flashes affection's sun through the cleared atmosphere of Peter's self-knowledge, of Peter's self-distrust.

Our Saviour had been very patient with His chosen successor. He had showered upon him the gifts of an infinite friendship. Relatively to what He bestowed, He received little in return. But He knew that Peter looked upon this little as the best he had to offer. Faulty as the offering often was, the motive back of it was, in the main, entirely sincere. Because

of this sincerity and the simple, constant loyalty of His friend, our Lord overlooked the faults, even the most serious one of the denial, and worked unceasingly to bring Peter to a better knowledge of what constituted true friendship. He knew that in proportion as this knowledge increased, the gifts of His friend would be characterized by fewer blemishes, would become more worthy of bestowal upon a Divine Friend.

One of the most beautiful qualities of St. Peter's affectionate attachment for our Lord was the open-hearted, unhesitating manner in which it was first given. As soon as Andrew announced to him that the Messias had been found, he went at once, unquestioningly, with his brother to meet Jesus. It was not to be expected that his intercourse with his Divine Friend—as far as he was concerned—would be complete, perfect from the beginning. But his quick, generous response to Christ's call, his ready co-operation with the grace of his vocation, was the best preparation he could have

made for the probation, the slow, perfecting process about to follow.

True friends, when they see faults in each other—as they inevitably will—must act as our Lord did with Peter. Let them keep in mind the real merit that formed the first foundation for their friendship; let them strive to throw into shadow, as far as possible, the many defects that threaten to obscure the good they find in each other. Patience will surely accomplish this end. It will do more. It will lessen the number, the intensity of the faults. Of course we could hardly expect to produce in others the same effect our Lord produced in Peter. The inspiration we give our friends is not strong enough, not divine enough to make saints of them. But, still, friends can and do inspire each other to stronger, more sustained efforts at self-correction. This is the highest purpose of friendship. To neglect it entirely means finally a loss of all friends. To strive for its attainment means first and always forgetful-

ness of self in an honest endeavor to bear with the faults of our friends. We must blind ourselves to the existence of these faults, except when our very effort to help those we love forces us to recognize their presence.

Sometimes our labor may seem to be lost, so far as our friend's improvement is concerned; but then we are no better than our Master. One of twelve failed to profit by His friendship. It is far better for us to risk an occasional fruitless service of friendship through generous, persevering loyalty to fixed principle, than to contract our own capacity for friendship by a selfish, oftentimes unfounded suspicion and fear lest our efforts be misdirected and meet with little or no response.

V

LAZARUS

ON the eastern slope of Mt. Olivet, about a mile from the summit stands a wretched Arab village, sheltering beneath a few ruinous roofs two score or more families. One could hardly gather from its present appearance of obscurity and neglect that here was the village visited so often by our Lord, and so dear to Him as the home of "Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus" whom He loved. Yet in the days of the Gospel Story this was the town of Bethania, nestling in a woody hollow, shaded by olive and almond trees and by the broad-spreading branches of stately oaks. Although less than two miles from Jerusalem, it enjoyed a peaceful repose quite at variance with the great city's bustle and distractions, its endless religious controversies and its bitter enmity toward our Saviour.

Wretched as the present hamlet is, the spot is sacred ground for those who seek in our Lord's life the Ideal of true friendship. For here is one of Friendship's shrines, and not the least of them. Here in spirit has knelt every friend who strove to love with a friendship like unto Christ's. And here has he drawn from the depths of Christianity, from the years that knew God in the flesh, an inspiration for the formation of higher, purer and more lasting friendships. A brother and two sisters dwelt in the town of Bethania. Their house was a well loved retreat of our Lord. For here He found a welcome rarely accorded Him elsewhere, a welcome that was warmed by real affection and purified by deep reverence and respect.

In discussing this series of three friendships, beginning with Lazarus, we instinctively feel the presence of an element peculiarly their own. It is an element that makes especially interesting and instructive the study of Christ's love for the family of Bethany. When we consider

the friendship of our Lord for His apostles and for John the Baptist, we feel that, true and vital as the friendship is, there is something woven into its fabric with which we can have no part, something we must mentally put aside before we can apply the lesson to ourselves. With His apostles and with His Precursor, He held a certain formal relationship, as the Redeemer with the work of redemption to perform. If we may use the term with due reverence, He appeared to them in an official, as well as personal, capacity. For all that He was none the less a personal friend, yet we find it difficult to separate the two ideas. In His choice of His Precursor and of His apostles, He had in mind above all else their special task as formal co-operators in the work of Redemption. With Lazarus and the two sisters the conditions were different. Of course they aided in His work of redemption; and He intended them to aid Him. But there was no formal position allotted to them. His choice of them was conditioned only by their faith in His Mission and

their true affection for Himself. He chose them to be His friends, nothing more—and nothing less.

The Gospel tells us little about Lazarus. We infer that he must have possessed means and a position of prominence among the Jews. At what time he became a friend of our Lord it is impossible to discover. We do know, however, that he entertained Him at his home about the middle of the last year of the public ministry. The very vivid and detailed account of the sickness of Lazarus, and of his death and resurrection as given by St. John comprises practically all our information concerning this special friendship. But in this account there is more than enough for our purpose; for we find in it a wealth of meaning. Even the apparently slight touches here and there give us a clearer knowledge of Christ's friendship for Lazarus than pages less skilfully written would convey.

It was in February of our Lord's last year on earth that Lazarus fell sick. His condition

became so serious as to alarm his two sisters. Ordinary remedies failed to avert the danger. Prayers, too—and who could doubt that they were many and fervent—had apparently brought no response from the God of Israel to whom they were offered in agonizing entreaty. Let us not imagine that the thoughts of the sisters had not been turned to their Divine Friend on earth until the message was dispatched. Rather indeed should we picture them dwelling upon His love for them every moment of their brother's illness. As the invalid tossed upon his bed in the restlessness and delirium of fever, ever did their thoughts go out to the distant Friend, and many a sigh of regret at His absence broke the silence of the sick-room. They knew He had the power to cure the sick. They had doubtless often seen this power exercised. And they felt, with the faith their true Friend had given them, that He would at once exercise His power in behalf of Lazarus, did He but hear of His friend's sickness.

Now the lips of the invalid move. He is speaking. Eagerly the sisters listen. It is the beloved name of Jesus that he utters. Again and again it falls upon the ears of the watchers by his bedside. What memories it arouses! Memories that have been so lovingly treasured in the safest, most secret recesses of the soul. Again they see the face of their Divine Friend, as He looked at them in the days gone by here beneath this very roof. His voice, caught up and jealously guarded by these walls that surround them, seems to sink once more into their hearts. Now, in spirit, Magdalen is at His feet, and sees Martha turn to chide her. And now her thoughts steal away to a distant banquet hall, to a figure with face so loving and voice so sweet; and as the words of forgiveness fall once more from memory's lips, a sudden resolve fills her heart. She raises her bowed head, and with tear-filled eyes looks at her sister. Martha at once reads the meaning in the glance, and gladly approves. Quickly a courier is called, and a single sentence is carried

beyond the Jordan to Perea where Jesus is dwelling, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

True friends need but state their wants to each other. No formal plea for help is required. That would indicate a lack of faith in the friendship; it would be an insult to one whose love seeks an opportunity of helping a friend. The sisters knew that the friendship of our Lord for Lazarus was perfect; that His love for him was so strong, so quick to respond, that they need only tell Him the danger threatening His friend. Only once before in the Gospel narrative is a request put thus, in the simple statement of a need. And on that other occasion it was a Mother, the Mother of God, who spoke to her Son, "They have no wine." And the implied request was granted. Here we have no bond of blood, no filial relationship between the two; the simple tie of friendship alone is sufficient to prompt the sisters to state their wish in the same indirect manner in which the Mother of God expressed

her desire. And the compliance of our Lord is as complete in one case as in the other.

It is worthy of notice, too, that Mary and Martha do not even mention the name of the "friend," simply referring to him as one whom the Lord loved. Generous and compelling, thoughtful and impressive, must have been our Saviour's conduct towards these friends, to have effected in them so complete a confidence in His love for Lazarus. To create this feeling of trust in the hearts of His friends at Bethany, our Lord did not have to tell them in so many words that He would always help them in their troubles. Indeed, it is difficult for us to imagine Him thus formally promising His assistance. The love and confidence He inspired in those who enjoyed His special friendship was the result rather of His manner of acting, of His whole bearing, than of many-worded protestations of affection. Perhaps one glance was sufficient for a quickly perceptive soul, like that of St. John for example,

to understand the message of love hidden from other eyes.

So it is in man's relations with man. Often people protest undying affection for each other, and later find out that the temple of friendship in which they worship is built upon sand and quickly sways to ruin before the first tempest of trial. To how many of our friends in prosperous days do we unhesitatingly send a message of distress in our time of trouble? How many of our friends have impressed their friendship so strongly upon us that we trustfully turn to them in adversity and tell them our needs? And upon how many have we ourselves made this impression? How many have we encouraged to turn to us when they sorely need a friend?

Our Lord did not at once hasten to Bethania, as the apostles, who knew of the message, expected He would do. His manner of acting surprised them, and surprised still more the eagerly expectant Martha and Mary. The hours went by as they awaited His coming, the

patient grew weaker and weaker and at last died. Their Divine Friend, tarrying in Perea, had not heeded their message! Sadly they prepared the body for burial and placed it in the tomb. The stone closing the entrance to the sepulchre was rolled into position, and the seal placed upon it.

Then the Friend came. He came to grant the request of the sisters in a way they had not expected—to restore Lazarus to life. But, in the meantime, the sorrowing Mary and Martha had suffered all the agony that death brings to a loving household. Why had our Lord acted thus? On the surface it did not appear to be the conduct of a true friend. But in this case, as in every other, Christ's mission to bring salvation to mankind made the first demand upon Him. Mary and Martha must suffer the temporary loss of their brother "for the glory of God: that the Son of God may be glorified." It was a most opportune time for performing a miracle. All the circumstances would cause the coming resurrection of Lazarus

to make a deep impression upon the Jews. Lazarus himself was well known, had many friends and acquaintances among the Pharisees. The place was very near to Jerusalem, towards which city at this time crowds of pilgrims were already starting for the celebration of the Passover. Many would see the dead body of Lazarus consigned to the tomb. There could be no doubt of his death; and the news of the miracle would be given the widest publicity. These were the motives that moved our Lord more strongly than the impulse even of the strongest friendship; just as with us higher duties often make us sacrifice opportunities to relieve the suffering of our friends.

But in the performance of His more important task, our Saviour did not put aside the natural affections of a man. When He saw Magdalen weeping at His feet, and the Jews weeping round about, He "groaned in spirit, and troubled himself. And said: Where have you laid him? They say to him: Lord, come and see. And Jesus wept." So marked were

the evidences of His grief that the bystanders marvelled at it, saying "Behold how he loved him."

But now all is ready for the miracle. The gloom of sorrow that unflinching duty had seen gather about the devoted friends may now be dispelled. By a single act the Son of God will advance His Father's interests, and at the same time bring joy to the desolate household of Bethany. " . . . He cried with a loud voice: Lazarus come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them: Loose him and let him go."

From the very Source of life had life gone forth into the dead form of Lazarus; out of Him who is life itself had hastened the vital energy that quickened into action the stilled heart, brought feeling to nerve and movement to muscle. It was a most wonderful miracle, one that only the Great Miracle-worker's own resurrection would surpass. And it was

performed for a friend at the request of friends.

The resurrection of Lazarus is not only a sign of Christ's love for him. It is also a sanctification of friendship, a revelation of God's approval of this virtue. He who acted thus for a friend will regard with high favor, and reward with priceless recompense, the true friendships that bind man to man.

Not that we can give to our friends what our Lord gave to Lazarus. But there is another life besides the life of the body, as there is another death besides that which marks the entrance to the tomb. Discouragement, like a dread disease, may find its way into the heart of our friend, may even end in the death of despair. And it is often wholly within our power to ward off this calamity, to give to our friend by encouragement, advice and consolation a new life of hope. Ambitions, aspirations, generous resolves may fall desperately wounded, dead or dying perhaps, back into the soul from which they sprang. And who knows how often

we may stand by the living tomb that hides them, and say, in imitation of our Saviour, "Lazarus come forth. Come forth from your burial place, dead hopes and thwarted desires, blinded vision and dulled capacity for happiness." And if our voice ring true, as the voice of the Divine Friend, life shall go from our lives into the hearts of our friends, stirring them once more to action, to the renewed strength of cheerful, persevering endeavor.

VI

MARTHA

ACTIVE, generous, impulsive, but somewhat lacking in the finer spiritual qualities of quick sympathetic insight and constant, complete self-forgetfulness—such is the first impression given us by the Gospel of Martha's friendship for our Lord. The words of Christ, as narrated by St. Luke, give us the keynote of her character, revealing at the same time her principal fault as a friend, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things."

The scene of this rebuke was the home of Martha at Bethany, where our Lord had stopped about supper-time one day during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, a few months before His death. Perhaps His coming had not been expected, and Martha, in consequence, was somewhat more than ordinarily

energetic in her efforts to prepare the meal for her beloved Friend. At any rate, while she was "busy about many things," hurrying in and out, giving orders to servants and personally looking after the smallest details, her sister Mary sat humbly at the Master's feet listening in wrapt attention to His words of instruction and encouragement. The inactivity of Magdalen was noticed by her sister who at first was satisfied with looking reproachfully at the silent figure. But gradually, as she passed and repassed the place where her Master sat with Mary at His feet, the look of perfect happiness on the face of the latter and her calm unconcern about the feast and the preparations for it, became more and more annoying to Martha. At last she restrained herself no longer, stood before our Lord and spoke thus: "Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me." Martha, lacking the subtler perception that characterized her sister's love for our Saviour, sought to please

Him in the manner that made the strongest appeal to her own nature. Her desire to serve Him was fundamentally just as strong as Mary's. But her method of expressing this desire, though commendable, was less pleasing than Mary's, and contained an element that would tend, unless wisely controlled, to react upon and lessen the very love that prompted the desire.

More given to external activity than to contemplation and internal union, it was continually necessary for Martha to exercise great prudence and self-restraint in order to preserve a proper relation between the love hidden in the heart and the love manifested in outward service. And in this instance she gave a practical illustration of the danger attending the active life. Her absorption in external affairs overbalanced the internal power of love and silent prayer. The nice adjustment between the two was lost for the moment. She failed to exercise suitable self-restraint because she began to place a higher value upon her

work of preparing supper than upon the spiritual union between Jesus and her sister. It is hardly likely that there was any necessity for Mary's services. Nor is it likely that the occasion called for the unusual activity displayed by Martha. The first effect of her bustling over-anxiety for the bodily refreshment of our Saviour was to blind her to these facts. Then she allowed herself to become irritated, and even envious.

Our Lord read the thoughts of her heart before she expressed them to Him. But He knew that her love for Him was still deep and sincere. He knew, too, that considerate treatment, an opportunity lovingly given to her of seeing the true state of her soul as He saw it, would correct her momentary impatience and envy, and would even render very improbable its future occurrence. He strove, as a true friend, to chasten and enlighten her affection for Him, knowing the latent power of it, and the promise it gave of future growth and final

unfolding into one of friendship's fairest flowers.

The words of Christ in answer to Martha's complaint, both in their meaning and in the manner of their expression, clearly reveal His thoughtful sympathy for her troubled heart, and His earnest desire to teach her how her love for Him might be shown in the future by a better-ordered, more spiritual service. "Martha, Martha." We can imagine we hear the name as He speaks it slowly, and then repeats it, so that she who listens may have time to regain her calm, and come to a knowledge of herself. Then, as self-knowledge reddens her cheek, and her head humbly bends in confusion and sorrow, the loving correction is given, and her Friend, the Son of God, teaches her the highest lesson ever taught to man: "But one thing is necessary, Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."

From now on, until the sickness and death of Lazarus, the Evangelists tell us nothing of

the two sisters. So we may only conjecture how the life of Martha was immediately affected by the reproof of Jesus. But we may be sure that she profited by it. We do know that she kept her faith in her Master, and turned instinctively to Him for help when her brother became seriously ill. When her request was apparently refused, and all hopes of seeing Lazarus cured by Jesus were buried in the tomb with the dead body of her brother, even then her faith failed her not, and her affection burned with undiminished flame.

She cannot understand why her Friend has refused to do for her what He has so often done for others, for total strangers even. But He is her Friend, and has so impressed His friendship on her soul, that whatever He choose to do or not to do must be right. This is the power of true friendship, and this its loyalty and unfailing trustfulness.

As soon as she hears that He is approaching, she leaves the crowd of friends who have come to console her, leaves the rich, influential Jews

from the city, leaves all her companions and relatives, even her sister, and rushes to meet her Greatest Friend, to meet Him who had once openly reproved her, and had, but three days before, deliberately withheld the power that could easily have warded off the cruel sorrow now consuming her. Still she goes to Him, and no bitter words of reproach fall from her lips. In their stead comes a protestation of faith where just a hint of complaint lies half-hidden beneath the sorrow and love in her voice: "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But now also I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Martha is sincere in her protestation of faith; and the faith is full so far as her knowledge goes, but the latter is still limited. And the limitations call for another manifestation of love on the part of the Friend. She has often been with Him, and often heard His discourses and seen His wonderful works, but still her words seem to imply an imperfect under-

standing of His power. Evidently she thinks that His bodily presence at the bedside of Lazarus would have been a necessary condition for the latter's cure. Nor does she yet look upon our Lord as able to work miracles by His own power.

Our Saviour sees this defect in her knowledge, and generously gives her an opportunity for meriting the grace of a fuller understanding, and a more perfect faith. He tells her that He is the Resurrection and the life, that all who rise, rise through Him, and all who live, live through Him; nay more, that they who believe in Him shall live an endless life of perfect happiness. Martha's soul receives and corresponds with every gift of grace contained in her Saviour's words. And so, when they are spoken, and this question put, "Believest thou this?" her answer is an immediate profession of faith: "Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, who art come into this world."

But not yet is her faith complete and un-

wavering, not even after the gracious condescension shown by her Lord in His latest effort to enlighten her. After Mary's arrival, and that of the Jews who had been with her in the house, they all approach the tomb. When Jesus asks that the stone before the entrance be removed, Martha shows her failure to comprehend the purpose and power of her Lord by remonstrating, "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he is now of four days." This time the answer of our Lord is less tender than before, but still as considerate in its wording and delivery as His purpose permits, "Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?" And the glory of God was indeed revealed to them when "he that had been dead came forth."

Let us not attempt to describe the feelings and conduct of Martha as she witnessed this most loving act of her Friend. Let us rather, like St. John who narrates the miracle, draw the veil over what followed, as if it were too sacred for us to look upon. The raising of Lazarus

from the dead is one of the most sublime manifestations of our Lord's friendship, not alone because a brother is restored to a heart-broken sister, but still more because the faith of this sister is enlightened and made firmer by the miracle.

And her love for her benefactor is thus lifted to a correspondingly higher plane. This wonderful event is by far the most important and effective step so far taken by our Lord in His efforts to perfect Martha's friendship for Himself. Indeed, in a certain sense it is the final step. For death is very soon to sever their intimate, personal relationship. Thereafter her love for Him will be sustained and made even stronger without the help of His visible presence.

From the very first her all-seeing Master had known the defects of Martha's friendship. Persistently, but with the most delicate consideration, He had gradually brought her to realize these defects. He knew that this self-knowledge was what she needed most. The will

to love Him and to show this love in the way most pleasing to Him was more in need of direction than of additional strength. The light that had been coming to her gradually as a result of Christ's patient effort to perfect her, burst suddenly into an unexpected glow at the tomb of Lazarus; and we may be sure that her love did not fail to lead her along the path it revealed. Henceforth a chastened Martha serves her Master, serves Him with a service more pleasing than in the past, because there is now a truer, a steadier balance between the actions of the outer life, and the love that lies hidden in the soul.

There are many who, like Martha, make mistakes in their manner of showing the love they have for their friends. Failure to understand the character of our friends, and hence a corresponding failure in our efforts to help and please them, may frequently irritate those we love, and even, in some cases, destroy the friendship itself. There is a double lesson to be learned from this fact. We must strive to

understand our friends and see whether our efforts to help them are being marred by an injudicious choice of means, or an irritating manner in the use of rightly chosen means. Our friends are not perfect as Martha's Friend was, and we must not expect them to possess the power and insight and patience of Christ.

Then, taking the opposite point of view, we should overlook the mistakes others make in their manner of showing their friendship for us. It is comparatively easy to recognize true love behind misguided actions when we really strive to search for it, when we firmly put the actions away from our minds. Then, with nothing intervening, the motive is bared and our hearts are quickened with responsive love.

Our Saviour's example in His treatment of Martha encourages and enlightens us in our efforts to bear with our friends, and help them gradually to see the defects in their friendship and the way to correct these defects. It is true, He is God, with the power and knowledge

of God, but still His treatment of Martha is for our edification and our instruction. He wishes us to follow His example, to look first for the love that prompts the misguided actions of a friend, and then to direct this love into channels that are most fitting for its manifestation. A faithful imitation of His example will bring about proportionately happy results.

Contrast Martha's conduct on the two occasions given us by the Gospel in which she served her Lord, and see in the difference a reason for courage and perseverance in imitating the method of treatment that effected this change. On each occasion Martha serves her Saviour at a supper given at Bethany. At the first supper her inordinate care about many things leads to irritation, envy and complaining. She makes herself miserable and is in danger of losing the fruits of friendship. A reproof, firm but considerate, is administered, and the crisis is passed safely. Martha's Friend is still as true and loving as before. Six months go by. The great lesson at the tomb of Lazarus is given.

And a very short time afterward Martha once more ministers to her Lord at Bethany.

Again she serves at the table unassisted by her sister, who kneels at her Master's feet, and anoints them with precious ointment. The voice of Judas, and of other disciples, is raised in protest at what they term a wilful waste. But Martha's voice is silent. No envy in her heart, no complaint on her lips, no ill-concealed impatience in her manner. She knows better now the value of Mary's love, and how pleasing to our Lord is her sister's method of showing this love. And she also knows better how to show her own love, in a manner that will bring true joy to the heart of her Divine Friend.

VII

MARY MAGDALEN

EACH friendship formed between God's creatures and the Uncreated Word made Flesh in the midst of men is a miracle of love. Its beauty grows greater, stands revealed in more and more entrancing lines the closer we study it; but the mystery of it grows too, becoming ever more puzzling to our limited intelligence. A final analysis, a comprehensive knowledge of this manifestation of Divine love for man, eludes the best efforts of even the most holy and learned. Before their ardent, ceaseless quest, it seems to recede with constantly quickening pace along limitless pathways, gliding deeper and deeper into the infinite depths of Divine Perfection, until at last it hides itself in the primal, all-embracing Mystery of the New Law, the Incarnation.

But there are degrees in the manifestation of God's love for us; degrees, therefore, in the miracle of His friendship for man. It is truly a transcendent miracle that Christ would call to His friendship even good men like Peter, James and John who, we have every reason to suppose, had always led upright lives. It is still more wonderful that He would treat as His friends those who, like Matthew or Zacheus, had, previous to their conversion, been the objects of well-merited public reproach; or like Nicodemus, whose response to our Lord's call was so tardy and so timorous. But the ever-unsearchable mystery of His more intimate dealings with men reaches its summit when this God of Purity, the Unspotted One, to whose closest service the chaste generation alone is called; when He who is the Spouse of Virgins looks with all-compelling love upon a fallen woman, a public sinner, one from whom the true loveliness of her sex had long since fled, whose false beauty of face and form barely hid the sad spectre of womanhood, haunting its

former home and shuddering in despair over the cold ashes of shame heaped up within it—Mary Magdalen.

Of the recorded friendships of Christ there is none that has so practical, so fruitful an application as this. Our Saviour was fully cognizant of this fact. He knew that the almost hopeless state of fallen woman in His own day, would find a counter-part in future years. He knew how potent for good pure womanhood would always be in the life of man, and that by reason of this very power men, consciously or unconsciously, would be all the quicker and harsher in condemning one who failed to exercise it, or sullied it, or lost it entirely. He knew too that if He, the embodiment of purity, God and Man, would raise from her fallen state, and take as a friend one whom all the world condemned, there would be given to future ages a double lesson: a lesson of hope for the erring one; and a lesson of charity, of prudent service, for those standing in judgment over her.

Our Lord's treatment of Magdalen after her conversion forms one of the clearest and most beautiful pictures in the New Testament. And the lines appear in even bolder and more beautiful relief if our study of this picture is preceded by the formation of a mental image of Magdalen's spiritual and mental state before her conversion. For this the Scripture gives us little material. Yet that little is amply sufficient. We are told that seven devils were cast from her, and she is referred to as a "sinner," "And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner." This, together with the plainly evidenced horror of the Pharisees at our Lord's failure to repulse her when she annointed His feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, reveals to us the detestable character and life of Mary Magdalen.

The impetuous, generous nature that later lent itself so unreservedly to the service of our Saviour, was given up in earlier years to an almost equally intense service of sin. Her ardent temperament would permit no halfway

measures, either in her life of shame, or in her life of repentance. Brought up in a refined environment, her education, companions, and pleasures previous to her career of vice, must have left an impress on her character too strong to be entirely effaced by sensual indulgence. The cause of her fall we cannot know with certainty. Tradition has it that her married life was unhappy, that her husband was too sordid and narrow to appreciate her generous love, and too selfish and cold to satisfy the cravings of her heart for a reciprocal affection and esteem.

Be that as it may, she would not discipline herself to the denial of legitimate love, but sought elsewhere, in forbidden, sinful channels, the full gratification of her desires. No doubt at first she sought, as others in similar conditions seek, only pure affection, honorable esteem. Conscience surely must have told her that she could find what she desired only where God's law guarded it in the bloom of purity and preserved it from corruption and death. This

voice of conscience she disregarded, and her very first serious rebellion against it must have revealed to her its full meaning, and showed her the futility of seeking happiness in sin. But she had fallen. And the natural result of her fall was a regret and sorrow made all the more bitter in her case by the vivid contrast between the deceptive, fleeting pleasures sin brought her, and the high ideals of happiness her early training had taught her to form and look forward to.

Had she wished, she could then easily have drawn back. The whirlpool of passion held her as yet only in its outer currents. But she would make no effort to save herself. Misery dulled her desire to do so. And then, as she again sought with quickly fading hope, some balm for her agony, she drifted farther away from safety. More and more speedily the waves of passion drew her on. Dizzily she was being whirled to the vortex, to absolute ruin. And now no longer did sensual pleasure give her any relief, any distraction. Powerful stimulant

in the beginning, it had gradually lost its effect.

And now, too, did she awaken to the full realization of another fact. Men whom she thought enthralled of her beauty and charms despised her. No one held any esteem for her. Nor could she look upon herself with any other sentiment but contempt. Nothing short of a miracle would save her now—a miracle of love, the all-forgiving, all-powerful love of a Divine Friend. Her moral sense was still keen enough to feel that moral guilt was the real cause of her rapidly approaching ruin.

He who could and would remove this guilt reveals Himself to her. Over the black whirlpool of passion goes the invitation to the sinful soul of Magdalen sinking to destruction. Here is one who wishes to save her. She knows it. Her heart, closed upon itself, opens to the attraction of His grace. She is passive to the infinite power it possesses. Back from the very vortex of destruction she is drawn to the feet of her Friend. And from now on, all the formerly misdirected force of her love is turned by the

help of God to the service of His Son. The love, it is true, needs purifying, needs strengthening, for misuse has sadly dulled its beauty and weakened its effectiveness, but the Friend who takes it knows well how to bring back its lost splendor and power, and direct it solely and completely to its rightful Object.

And at once He begins the task, nobly, generously, as a true Friend. Ignoring her past, now eternally hid by the veil of Divine mercy and forgiveness, He takes her without further test of her faith—for it has passed the supreme crisis—into the band of His followers. "And it came to pass afterwards, that he travelled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God: and the twelve with him. And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary who is called Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were gone forth. . . ."

His great act of friendship for her does not stand alone. It is followed by constant, painstaking care in guarding and maturing the fruits

of conversion that were to ripen so rapidly in the warm sun of His loving kindness. Day by day, and month by month, as knowledge of her Saviour's divine nature and lofty mission filled her soul, the power of her affection, purified by the grace she shared so copiously, showed itself in the ever-increasing service she gave her Friend. Thoughts of her past life often came to her mind. But they no longer had power to deaden her efforts to rise, or dull her vision of the perfection possible even for one who had sunk so low. Rather did these thoughts serve, in an unusual manner, to stimulate her spiritual energy, and quicken her spiritual sight, so that, unlike her sister Martha, she unerringly selected the most pleasing manner of serving her Lord. Having sought inordinately the things of the world, she now experienced a complete revulsion of feeling, and dared not take, without trembling, even an innocent part in earthly matters. Not that she ignored the practical affairs and human cares of life. The Gospel tells us that she, with the other pious women, "ministered

unto" Christ of this world's substance. She had, too, a sister's deep love for her brother and attended him in his sickness, weeping with Martha at his tomb. But all her other loves and cares were spontaneously put aside when she had an opportunity of sitting at the feet of her Saviour, of listening to His words, and of contemplating His perfections.

Our Lord, knowing the purity of her motives, her singleness of purpose, encouraged her in this, even at the expense of rebuking Martha, His friend who had never fallen. But He knew that the rebuke was needed. And the very fact that He gave it shows His high estimate of Martha's deep humility and faith. He would not have tried so severely one who was less perfect than Martha. To show His friendship for the penitent sister, to encourage her efforts and strengthen still further her love, He administers public reproof to the ever-faithful, but sometimes over-busy, elder sister: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary.

Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Good came to both sisters from this reproof: Martha had, as a result of it, a better knowledge of how to please her Friend, and Magdalen had the consolation of knowing that she had chosen the best possible method of showing her gratitude to her Saviour.

How eagerly do we look for encouragement from a friend! And how helpful and stimulating is even the slightest expression of approval from one whom we love and strive to serve! Sometimes, unlike our Lord, men are heedless of this hunger in the hearts of friends for a word of praise. And have not many friendships been dwarfed, have not many dwindled away entirely, on account of this thoughtlessness?

The evangelists give us several other striking evidences of our Lord's friendship for Mary Magdalen. At the tomb of Lazarus it is to Martha that He gives His promise of raising her brother to life. But the promise is not fulfilled until Mary arrives. Nor does the

Divine Friend give so great an evidence of grief with Martha as with Mary, for the tears of Jesus fall only when Magdalen throws herself weeping at His feet, not before, when the elder sister speaks to Him.

It was of Mary that Jesus spoke these words of commendation after she had anointed His feet at Bethany: "For she in pouring this ointment upon my body, hath done it for my burial. Amen I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told for a memory of her."

Magdalen, too, was privileged on the afternoon of Good Friday to stand beneath the cross, and later to help arrange the body of her Friend for burial. And she was among the few chosen ones who were the last to look upon the silent figure resting in the tomb.

Then the darkness of night descends upon the weeping Magdalen, but it is as broad daylight compared to the darkness of grief that the loss of her Friend forces upon her soul.

All of the following Sabbath she mourns. "And on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark into the sepulchre: and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre." Her heart sank. Sorrow deeper than before, if that were possible, came upon her. She could not have even the consolation of looking upon the dead body of her master.

Peter and John were summoned. They entered the tomb. Alas! it was too true; the body was gone. The apostles departed, "But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping." Her Friend was dead. His body was gone. But the spot where It had rested still remained. This, and a priceless memory, were all that were left her. She would hold both the one and the other. So she stood by the empty tomb; and God's Son knew how completely the memory of Himself possessed her mind. Knew and had compassion. And once again He comforted His friend.

Turning from the tomb and from the angels

standing within, she gazed with tear-dimmed eyes upon the form of Jesus. But the veil of grief and distraction hung before her vision. And she knew Him not; knew Him not until He spoke her name. Jesus, her Friend, her All, her God, addressed her by the same sweet, familiar name she had heard so often fall from His lips, "Mary."

And thus to Magdalen first of all, to one who had fallen so low, but had been raised by penitence to the lofty state of familiar, personal friendship with Jesus Christ, did the Risen Lord reveal Himself: "But he rising early the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

Between Magdalen the sinner, who vainly seeks happiness in sensual pleasure, and Magdalen the saint, who seeks the body of her Saviour in the empty tomb, there stretches a gulf as wide as God's Mercy itself, and as deep as the immeasurable distance from sin to sanctity. From the vivid contrast between the two

Magdalens, and from the Saviour's love that made possible the contrast by saving the fallen woman, there have been drawn many lessons of warning, of consolation and of encouragement. There is one lesson, however, that we might very easily lose sight of, for it is not the most obvious one, nor is it a lesson that teaches us a duty sternly imposed by positive command, a duty that we may never shirk without committing serious sin.

Its force lies, rather, in the appeal that it makes to our higher, more generous nature, an appeal almost as plaintive as the one that arose from the sinful woman's heart to the Most Pure Heart of her Master. Our highest motive for responding to that appeal lies in the fact that He responded. And our manner of responding to it should be in imitation of His manner, as far as we are able. And the lesson is this: not only did our Lord forgive Magdalen and encourage her to lead a better life, but He followed up this forgiveness and the bestowal of grace to avoid sin, by establishing

with the former sinful woman the sacred relation of friendship. Not only did He shower upon her the mercy of a forgiving God, but He also gave her the opportunity of personal companionship with Himself, was a Friend to her, and graciously permitted her to be a friend to Him.

Divine precept imposes upon us the obligation of being charitable to the fallen, of assisting them to rise from sin in so far as we are able. But Divine example and Divine counsel exhort us to follow up this charity and this obligatory assistance, by giving, where prudence permits, our friendship also.

Christ's treatment of Magdalen shows us that the fallen who claim the exercise of a commanded charity, may be, in certain cases, also the objects of a charity that goes beyond the limits of command, the objects even of personal, familiar friendship. And who can tell how many of the fallen who have been raised from sin, have relapsed into their former state, because those who helped to raise them were not

generous enough to give friendship as well as charity, were heedless of the piteous appeal that was borne by our Lord Himself from helpless hearts to the hearts of those who could, but would not hear it?

VIII

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

JOHN THE BAPTIST is the first to appear in the history of the friendships formed by our Lord during His public ministry. Another John, the beloved disciple, is the last of these human friends to leave the scene of his friendship, sanctified so deeply by love, labor and sorrow. With him the series ends. John, the Precursor, stands in solitary, strange grandeur by the Jordan before the opening of his Master's mission, and preaches the coming of his Friend, the expected of Nations. Long years after the Messias had consummated His work on Calvary, the other John, the last of those who had seen with their eyes, and looked upon and handled the word of life, moves alone amongst men, preaching to them the lesson his Friend had come on earth to teach, the lesson he had learned so well from the heart of

the Friend: "Dearly beloved, let us love one another: for charity is of God. And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

The separation of John from Jesus was of far longer duration than that of the other friends of our Saviour. For him the final, eternal union in heaven was postponed for many weary years. But he, of all the followers of our Saviour, seems to have been best fitted to bear this temporary exile. For his love in many ways was both deeper and loftier than that of the others, and he was humbly conscious that the personal love our Lord gave him in return was greater than that which He gave the others.

The predilection of our Saviour for St. John is shown at the very outset of His Ministry. The first disciples called by Christ are Andrew and John. In response to His invitation, the two follow their new Leader to His humble dwelling, "and they stayed with Him that day." Who can measure these first gifts of

Divine Friendship poured into the soul of John during the precious hours passed with Jesus that first day of an eternal Friendship? For the grace of this vocation was ever to be regarded as a priceless pledge destined to rest unharmed in the heart of John through seventy and more years of a ceaseless and stern probation.

We have another proof of our Lord's love for John, and also a clue to the motive of this love, in the name He gave to the two sons of Zebedee. "And he named them Boanerges which is the son of thunder." The soul of John, as that of his brother James, burned with an unquenchable fire of love for our Lord. As fast as a flash of lightning, as vehement, as crashing as thunder was the action of this love. No hesitation in daring great things, no careful economy of health or possessions, or even of life itself, characterized John's service of his Saviour.

This impetuous, generous love was present from the beginning, and our Divine Lord re-

vealed His knowledge of its presence by the name He gave the two apostles. Later in the ministry, the brothers give evidence of this impetuous zeal in His service. A Samaritan village refuses to shelter them, and they ask the Saviour to call destruction down upon the unbelieving inhabitants who refuse entrance to His emissaries. It is true, this fiery anger is partly prompted by personal chagrin, but our Lord recognizes the sincere love for His cause that forms a strong and deep motive for their passionate outburst.

Again, when they seek the favor of sitting, the one on His right, the other on His left in the kingdom of heaven, He firmly, but withal gently, chides them for the purely personal element in their request, and then shows His insight into their true character, and His confidence in them, by proposing the question, "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" This is a test of their love. A friend tries His friends, and the trial meets with an immediate and gratifying response, "They

say to him: We can." and time proved the sincerity of their impetuous, generous answer.

Many instances of our Saviour's special friendship for John are recorded in the New Testament. It is John, together with James and Peter, who is present when our Lord raises to life the daughter of Jairus. The same three are with Him on Mt. Tabor, and are the only witnesses of the Transfiguration. Again, they are chosen especially to witness the contrasting agony in Gethsemane. The others are left near the entrance to the garden, while these three go into its inner recesses and see revealed, as no man had ever before seen, the human nature of our Lord with its unlooked-for capabilities of suffering.

It is John who, with Peter, was selected to go into the city and prepare for the Last Supper. And it is the same two who follow our Lord after the betrayal and go to the house of the high priest. But from now on the evangelists give the beloved disciple more of an individual prominence. It seems as if his friend-

ship for Christ no longer needs to shelter itself beside that of Peter and James; for it now proves its latent power to stand alone and hold unhurt its formerly half-hidden beauty.

Peter falls three times in the house of Caiphas, but John's love is stronger than its trials. The other apostles mingle with the crowd on Calvary, hiding themselves amidst the thousands who view the crucifixion, but John's place is beneath the cross of Him whom he loves.

The beloved disciple, however, is not the only one to give signs of special friendship. For his Lord is showering infinitely greater gifts of love upon His faithful friend. At the Last Supper Jesus places John next to Himself, and permits him to rest his head upon His Sacred Heart. On Calvary He gives to this same apostle the one dearest to Him of all the daughters of Eve; He consigns our Blessed Lady to John's care, and gives her to him as a mother.

Although our Lord showed His love for John in many ways, the most distinctive mark of

J. Janssens pin

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE LEADS MARY FROM THE TOM

friendship given to the beloved disciple was a special, an exceptionally clear and deep insight into the Heart of the Saviour. This insight was unique. No other of our Lord's followers gave evidence of so spiritual, so sympathetic a knowledge of the secrets hidden in the Divine Personality of Jesus Christ. Looking at the relationship between our Lord and St. John from this point of view only, we may say that here we have the highest friendship between the Son of God and man. Greater dignities and greater responsibilities were given to St. Peter; greater mercy and probably a tenderer love were showered upon Magdalen; but upon the beloved disciple was bestowed in fuller measure than upon any other that which is granted to only the closest friends—a knowledge of the heart's inmost nature.

To John was unfolded the Sacred Heart of His Saviour far more widely than to the other friends of the public ministry. To John was given the clearest vision of the mystical beau-

ties of this infinitely beautiful Heart of God. It is easier to note and describe the effects of the apostle's intimate knowledge of His Master than to explain satisfactorily the cause of it. Between the Heart of our Lord and that of His beloved disciple there was an unusually sympathetic relationship, a closeness of spiritual contact well symbolized, but of course inadequately, by the physical nearness of John to his Divine Friend at the Last Supper, resting as he did upon the latter's bosom, and feeling each throb of the Sacred Heart.

Spiritual facts are elusive and difficult to analyze. Especially true is this when we attempt to grasp the foundation and cause of Christ's special graciousness to John. When He first saw the sons of Zebedee, He knew at once—although it was in its crude, undeveloped state—the exceptional capacity of the younger brother for the deepest love, the keenest vision. The Gospel here and there, but rarely and with disappointing brevity, gives a vivid touch that hints at the marvellous growth and sur-

passing beauty of the rapidily developing friendship. Who can tell the quick, full response of John to His Master, as day by day they walked together conversing of the deep mystery of Redemption, and all it meant of suffering as well as of happiness? In His beloved disciple Christ found a friend who possessed the rare trait of consistent, acutely perceptive sympathy. And each flash of newly-awakened understanding, and of sincere, unselfish devotion on John's part opened wider to him the entrance to his Saviour's heart, and led him deper into its infinite depths of beauty and love.

We have an evidence of John's exceptional knowledge of our Lord's heart in his account of the miraculous feeding of the multitude on the shore of Lake Tiberias, an event which took place a year before the crucifixion. "When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this he said to

try him: for he himself knew what he would do."

The other three evangelists narrate the same miracle, but they all pass over this question and the revelation of its motive. John alone speaks of it, and, quick to fear that others might misconstrue the real purpose of the question, gives the reason for it, showing at the same time the ever-scrupulous care of a true friend, and also an intimate knowledge of his Master's mind.

It is John who, with St. Peter, runs to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection. Spurred on by love, he is the first to reach the empty sepulchre. Humbly he waits until his companion enters, and then follows him. Deeply as St. Peter loves, and despite his divine prerogative of primacy, the full meaning of the empty tomb, of the napkin and linen cloths scattered about, does not at once strike upon him and inspire belief in the Resurrection. It is the disciple with the keener vision who promptly, unhesitatingly gives assent to the

greatest of miracles, "Then that other disciple also went in, who came first to the sepulchre: and he saw and believed."

Once more after the Resurrection John gave proof of that superior knowledge which sprang from his more deeply spiritual friendship for his Lord. He showed it by his quickness in perceiving the presence of the glorified Saviour. He had gone out fishing on the Sea of Tiberias with Peter and five other disciples, "And when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus." He spoke to them, and at His word they let down the net on the right side of the boat. Their effort was amply repaid, "And now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: It is the Lord."

The strongest evidence of the close relationship existing between our Lord and St. John is given us in the beginning of the Gospel written by the beloved disciple. It is St. Peter who

breaks forth into that wonderful confession of faith in our Lord's divinity, "Thou art Christ, the son of the living God," but it is John who leads us deep into the eternal, unspeakable splendors that lie beneath that fundamental truth. To Peter was granted the gift of unhesitating, generous faith. To John, together with the gift of faith was given also a clearer understanding of the doctrine so generously professed by Peter. The mystery of the Word clothing Itself in garments of flesh, with the miracles of love and self-abasement necessitated by this Infinite Act, were so intensely real to the mind of John because of his quicker, fuller grasp of their deep significance.

Next to the gift of Himself, with its twofold sacrificial form—the veiled, unbloody offering of the upper chamber, and the bleeding Victim exposed on Calvary's summit—next to this, our Lord could offer no testimony of friendship so strong and so tender as that special insight into the double mystery of His Divine and of His Human Nature possessed by the friend

who rested upon the heart of God on the eve of the Crucifixion.

As time goes by and the followers of Christ, one by one, are called to their reward, the memory of this Divine Friendship, and all the infinite wealth of love it stood for, grows even stronger and more vivid—if that be possible—in the soul of John. His own death draws near. Over three-score years have now passed since last he looked upon the Word made Flesh. With an eager longing for the eternal union that lies beyond his fast-approaching dissolution, he gathers together all the forces of love for one supreme effort, one final manifestation of friendship; a manifestation that shall stand for all ages as a vindication of his title, "beloved disciple," and as a vindication also of the Divinity of His Saviour.

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from the lips of God, but a transcription of an earlier revelation. For the words that he puts on the manuscript have been burned into his soul many years before, and are now brought forth to form a Last Testament, as it were, in which he bequeathes to posterity a priceless heritage of love: his own unique and intimate knowledge of the Word made Flesh, a knowledge that he had drawn from the Sacred Heart of the Saviour in His earthly sojourning with men.

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